

Chapter 2

Faith and Facticity

E io: “Per filosofici argomenti
e per autorità che quinci scende
cotale amor convien che in me si ’mprenti:
ché ’l bene, in quanto ben, come
s’intende,
così accende amore, e tanto maggio
quanto più di bontate in sé comprende.
Dunque a l’essenza ov’ è tanto
avvantaggio,
che ciascun ben che fuor di lei si trova
altro non è ch’un lume di suo raggio,
più che in altra convien che si mova
la mente, amando, di ciascun che cerne
il vero in che si fonda questa prova”.

(*Par.* XXVI.25-36)¹

1. Faith as a condition of salvation in Dante and Aquinas: Aquinas, explicit faith and implicit faith. 2. Dante and the power of the encounter to regeneration and redemption – divine vulnerability and a reconfiguration of soteriological emphases.

The virtuous pagans, or rather the reprobation of the virtuous pagans, is a constant source of concern for Dante in the *Commedia*, and his encounter with the eagle in the great justice cantos of the *Paradiso* does little to allay this concern; for the eagle, for all its sense of the inscrutability of God’s ways in the area of election (the ‘Or tu chi se’ che vuo’ sedere a scranna’ sequence beginning at XIX.79), and

¹ And I: “By philosophic arguments and by authority that descends from here, such love must needs imprint itself on me; for the good, inasmuch as it is good, kindles love in proportion as it is understood, and so much the more the more of good it contains in itself. Therefore, to that essence wherein is such supremacy that whatsoever good be found outside of it is naught save a beam of its own radiance, more than to any other must the mind be moved, in love, of whoever discerns the truth on which this proof is founded.”

indeed of God's willingness, not only to honour the intercession of the saints vis-à-vis the righteous of antiquity (the case of Trajan), but even to grace them in their own right (the case of Rhipeus), confirms also the status of explicit faith in the Christ as a necessary condition of salvation.² In fact, Dante's position here – again turning on the notion of explicit faith as a condition of homecoming – is already clear from the fourth canto of the *Inferno* and from the seventh canto of the *Purgatorio*, where it is a question of the noble pagans as excluded on the basis (a) of their lacking baptism as the 'portal of faith' (the 's'elli hanno mercedi, / non basta, perché non ebber battesimo, / ch'è porta della fede che tu credi' of *Inf.* IV.34-36),³ and (b) of their negative unbelief (the 'Io son Virgilio; e per null' altro rio / lo ciel perdei che per non aver fé' of *Purg.* VII.7-8),⁴ a notion taken up with if anything heightened pathos in the 'Matto è chi spera' passage of *Purg.* III.34-45:

“Matto è chi spera che nostra ragione
 possa trascorrer la infinita via
 che tiene una sustanza in tre persone.
 State contenti, umana gente, al *quia*;

² Aquinas (on the terminology), *De ver.* 14.11, resp.: 'implicitum proprie dicitur esse illud in quo quasi in uno multa continentur; explicitum autem in quo unumquodque ipsorum in se consideratur. Et transferuntur haec nomina a corporalibus ad spiritualia. Unde quando aliqua multa, virtute continentur in aliquo uno, dicuntur esse in illo implicite, sicut conclusiones in principiis. Explicite autem in aliquo continetur quod in eo actu existit; unde ille qui cognoscit aliqua principia universalia, habet implicitam cognitionem de omnibus conclusionibus particularibus; qui autem conclusiones actu considerat, dicitur ea explicite cognoscere. Unde et explicite dicimur aliqua credere quando eis actu cogitatis adhaeremus; implicite vero quando adhaeremus quibusdam, in quibus sicut in universalibus ista continentur; sicut qui credit fidem Ecclesiae veram esse, in hoc quasi implicite credit singula quae sub fide Ecclesiae continentur.' T. Penelhum, 'The Analysis of Faith in St. Thomas Aquinas', *Religious Studies* 13, 2 (1977), 133-54; A. Plantinga, 'Reason and Belief in God', in A. Plantinga and N. Wolterstorff (eds), *Faith and Rationality* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 16-93.

³ but if they have merit, that does not suffice, for they did not have baptism, which is the portal of the faith you hold. 'Parte' for 'porta' in the majority of MSS, but see Petrocchi (ed.), vol. 1, pp. 170-71 on patristic and canonistic usage, and *Par.* XXV. 7-12 with its account of 'entering' by way of baptism upon a life of faith: 'con altra voce omai, con altro vello / ritornerò poeta, e in sul fonte / del mio battesimo prenderò 'l cappello; / però che ne la fede, che fa conte / l'anime a Dio, quivi intra' io, e poi / Pietro per lei sì mi girò la fronte.' On Dante and the sacraments generally, P. Armour, *The Door of Purgatory. A Study of Multiple Symbolism in Dante's Purgatorio* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), especially pp. 1-15, and, more recently, F. Bucci, 'Memorie battesimali tra *Inferno* e *Purgatorio* alla luce di tre figure veterotestamentarie', *La Cultura. Rivista trimestrale di filosofia letteratura e storia* 43 (2005), 2, 217-55.

⁴ I am Virgil, and for no other fault did I lose heaven than for not having faith.

ché, se potuto aveste veder tutto,
 mestier non era parturir Maria;
 e disiär vedeste senza frutto
 tai che sarebbe lor disio quetato,
 ch'etternalmente è dato lor per lutto:
 io dico d'Aristotile e di Plato
 e di molt' altri"; e qui chinò la fronte,
 e più non disse, e rimase turbato.⁵

From the outset, then, the idea is secure, but it is in the justice cantos of the *Paradiso* that Dante's commitment to an explicit profession of the Christ as the condition of standing at last in God's presence moves unequivocally into view. Having raised, then, the case of the good man on the banks of the Indus innocent through no fault of his own of Christ and clergy but condemned even so to an eternity of separation and sadness, the Eagle of righteousness proceeds by way of the firmest possible indication that no one comes to the Father but by way of the Son, by way of the Christ either as to come or else as already present among us. True, not all those who *do* come to the Father by way of the Son will be welcomed into his company, for many among those who cry 'Lord! Lord!' do so to their shame.⁶ But that, for the moment, is not what matters, Dante's main contention being that salvation can only ever be by way of the cross and of the degradation of the cross:

Poi si quetaro quei lucenti incendi
 de lo Spirito Santo ancor nel segno
 che fé i Romani al mondo reverendi,
 esso ricominciò: "A questo regno
 non salì mai chi non credette 'n Cristo,
 né pria né poi ch'el si chiavasse al legno.
 Ma vedi: molti gridan "Cristo, Cristo!",
 che saranno in giudicio assai men *prope*
 a lui, che tal che non conosce Cristo;
 e tai Cristian dannerà l'Etìòpe,

⁵ "Foolish is he who hopes that our reason may compass the infinite course taken by the one substance in three persons. Be content, human race, with the *quia*; for if you had been able to see everything, no need was there for Mary to give birth; and you have seen desiring fruitlessly men such that their desire would have been satisfied which is given them for eternal grief: I speak of Aristotle and of Plato and of many others." And here he bent his brow and said no more, and remained troubled.

⁶ Matt. 7: 21: 'Non omnis qui dicit mihi: "Domine, Domine" intrabit in regnum cœlorum', with, for the 'Ethiopean' moment of *Paradiso* XIX (ll. 109-11), Matt. 8: 11-12: 'dico autem vobis quod multi ab oriente et occidente venient, et recumbent cum Abraham et Isaac et Iacob in regno cœlorum; filii autem regni eicientur in tenebras exteriores ...'

quando si partiranno i due collegi,
l'uno in eterno ricco e l'altro inòpe”.

(*Par.* XIX.100-11)⁷

In fact, the ‘*assai men prope*’ moment of line 107 opens up both a fresh set of problems and a fresh set of possibilities in the area of soteriological concern, the notion of those without knowledge of the Christ as even so standing more immediately in his presence than those naming the name straightaway inviting another look at the whole issue of election – an invitation by no means lost on Dante as his argument unfolds. For the moment, however, the case is open and shut. Other than for those who, like Trajan and Rhipeus among the pagans, were delivered miraculously from their paganism (the ‘*D’i corpi suoi non uscir, come credi, / Gentili, ma Cristiani, in ferma fede / quel d’i passuri e quel d’i passi piedi*’ of *Par.* XX.103-105),⁸ or for those who, like the patriarchs in the celestial rose, were believers in Christ to come (the ‘*Da questa parte onde ’l fiore è maturo / di tutte le sue foglie, sono assisi / quei che credettero in Cristo venturo*’ of XXXII.22-24),⁹ there can be no salvation, Christ and Christ alone being the door of the tabernacle, the sole way into God’s presence and the blessedness thereof.¹⁰

Thomas’s too, when it comes to the fundamentals of Christian belief and profession (to, for example, the threefold nature of the Godhead or the divinity of the Christ), is a commitment to the notion of explicit faith as a principle of salvation. In the *Summa theologiae* the matter arises in the

⁷ After those glowing flames of the Holy Spirit became quiet, still in the sign which the Romans made reverend to the world, it began again: “To this realm none ever rose who believed not in Christ, either before or after he was nailed to the tree. But behold, many cry Christ, Christ, who, at the judgement, shall be far less near to him than he who knows not Christ; and the Ethiop will condemn such Christians when the two companies shall be separated, the one forever rich, and the other poor.”

⁸ They came forth from their bodies not as you think, Gentiles, but Christians, with firm faith, the one in the feet that were to suffer, the other in the feet that had suffered. V. Horia, ‘L’Empereur Trajan personnage de la *Divine Comédie*’, *Journal of American Romance Academy of Arts and Sciences* 8-9 (1986), 94-97; G. Whately, ‘The Uses of Hagiography: the Legend of Pope Gregory and the Emperor Trajan in the Middle Ages’, *Viator* 15 (1984), 25-63. Also, N. Vickers, ‘Seeing is Believing: Gregory, Trajan and Dante’s Art’, *Dante Studies* 101 (1983), 67-86.

⁹ On this side, wherein the flower is mature in all its petals, are seated those who believed in Christ yet to come.

¹⁰ *Mon.* II.vii.4-6: ‘quod nemo, quantumcunque moralibus et intellectualibus virtutibus et secundum habitum et secundum operationem perfectus, absque fide salvari potest, dato quod nunquam aliquid de Cristo audiverit ... Hostium tabernaculi Christum figurat, qui est hostium conclavis eterni, ut ex evangelio elici potest.’

course of the faith articles at the beginning of the *Secunda secundae*, where in reply to the question as to whether a man is bound to believe anything explicitly (*utrum homo teneatur ad credendum aliquid explicite*), he affirms that whereas the contingencies of the scriptural narrative need not compel in conscience, the leading propositions of the faith are binding for the purposes of salvation:

Determinatio igitur virtuosi actus ad proprium et per se obiectum virtutis est sub necessitate praecepti, sicut et ipse virtutis actus. Sed determinatio actus virtuosi ad ea quae accidentaliter vel secundo se habent ad proprium et per se virtutis obiectum non cadit sub necessitate praecepti nisi pro loco et tempore. Dicendum est ergo quod fidei obiectum per se est id per quod homo beatus efficitur, ut supra dictum est. Per accidens autem vel secundo se habent ad obiectum fidei omnia quae in Scriptura divinitus tradita continentur, sicut quod Abraham habuit duos filios, quod David fuit filius Isai, et alia huiusmodi. Quantum ergo ad prima credibilia, quae sunt articuli fidei, tenetur homo explicite credere, sicut et tenetur habere fidem.

(*ST IIa IIae.2.5 resp.*)¹¹

Careful as it is to distinguish between the primary and the secondary substance of the Christian profession, the passage nonetheless settles on the notion of explicit faith regarding those things pertaining to it as of the essence. And what applies in Article 5 relative to the contingencies of Scripture applies also in Article 7, where it is a question of the incarnation, and in Article 8, where it is a question of the Trinity, each of which requires consent in conscience as a condition of man's coming home to God as the beginning and end of his journeying.¹² True, there is in both these articles

¹¹ Accordingly, just as a virtuous act is required for the fulfilment of a precept, so is it necessary that the virtuous act should terminate in its proper and direct object: but, on the other hand, the fulfilment of the precept does not require that a virtuous act should terminate in those things which have an accidental or secondary relation to the proper and direct object of that virtue, except in certain places and at certain times. We must, therefore, say that the direct object of faith is that whereby man is made one of the blessed, as stated above [qu. I, art. 8]; while the indirect and secondary object comprises all things delivered by God to us in Holy Writ, for instance that Abraham had two sons, that David was the son of Jesse, and so forth. Therefore, as regards the primary points or articles of faith, man is bound to believe them, just as he is bound to have faith.

¹² *ST IIa IIae.2.7 and 8 resp.*: *'illud proprie et per se pertinet ad obiectum fidei per quod homo beatitudinem consequitur. Via autem hominibus veniendi ad beatitudinem est mysterium incarnationis et passionis Christi, dicitur enim Act. IV, "non est aliud nomen datum hominibus in quo oporteat nos salvos fieri". Et ideo mysterium incarnationis Christi aliquo modo oportuit omni tempore esse creditum apud omnes ... mysterium Christi explicite credi non potest sine fide Trinitatis, quia in mysterio Christi hoc continetur quod*

a concession, or at any rate something close to it, when, speaking of the way in which Christ's passion was anticipated by the Jews in certain of their sacrifices, Thomas notes that, while for the leaders of the people (the *superiores* or *maiores*) an act of explicit faith in the Christ as yet to come was obligatory, for the ordinary followers of the Law (the *inferiores* or *minores*) implicit faith was enough.¹⁵ Since the coming of Christ, however, superiors and inferiors alike stand in need of explicit faith as the ground of their salvation, Thomas's central contention to the effect that for man as man to be fully and unambiguously is to be explicitly in Christ therefore surviving intact.

To this extent, then, Aquinas's position on the need for explicit faith as a condition of salvation coincides with Dante's; for if each is of the opinion that all those born into the *καρπός* and living under the New Law are dependent on a formal profession of faith as the basis of their eternal happiness, each makes provision for those born before the *καρπός* and living under the Old Law, theirs too, albeit by way of anticipation, being a profession of the Messiah. True, Aquinas nuances the argument by introducing into it a distinction between (under the Old Law) Jewish inferiority and superiority, Dante contenting himself with a sense of the status of the patriarchs as believers in the Christ *avant la lettre*; but that notwithstanding, it is in both cases a question of imminent deliverance. Differences begin to open up, however, in respect of those born before the *καρπός* and living beyond the pale, for where Dante seems wedded to the notion of paganism as entailing an eternity, if not of suffering, then certainly of sighing, Thomas, by contrast, appears to extend the notion of implicit faith, or something close to it, to all those in the pagan world ignorant of the Christ but alert in some other way to God's salvific purpose for man. The key passage here comes in his reply to Objection 3 in the *IIa*

filius Dei carnem assumpserit, quod per gratiam spiritus sancti mundum renovaverit, et iterum quod de spiritu sancto conceptus fuerit.'

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 7 resp. and 8 resp.: 'Post peccatum autem fuit explicite creditum mysterium Christi non solum quantum ad incarnationem, sed etiam quantum ad passionem et resurrectionem, quibus humanum genus a peccato et morte liberatur. Aliter enim non praefigurassent Christi passionem quibusdam sacrificiis et ante legem et sub lege. Quorum quidem sacrificiorum significatum explicite maiores cognoscebant, minores autem sub velamine illorum sacrificiorum, credentes ea divinitus esse disposita de Christo venturo, quodammodo habebant velatam cognitionem ... Et ideo eo modo quo mysterium Christi ante Christum fuit quidem explicite creditum a maioribus, implicite autem et quasi obumbrate a minoribus, ita etiam et mysterium Trinitatis. Et ideo etiam post tempus gratiae divulgatae tenentur omnes ad explicite credendum mysterium Trinitatis. Et omnes qui renascuntur in Christo hoc adipiscuntur per invocationem Trinitatis, secundum illud Matth. ult., "euntes, docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti".'

IIae.2.7 article mentioned above, an objection turning on the testimony of the Areopagite relative to those living both before Christ and outside the Law but nonetheless ministered to by the angels: ‘multi gentiliū salutem adepti sunt per ministerium Angelorum, ut Dionysius dicit, IX cap. Cael. Hier. Sed gentiles non habuerunt fidem de Christo nec explicitam nec implicitam, ut videtur, quia nulla eis revelatio facta est. Ergo videtur quod credere explicitē Christi mysterium non fuerit omnibus necessarium ad salutem’,¹⁴ to which Aquinas is ready with a twofold reply. First, then, he rejects the claim that all pagans living before Christ were ignorant of him, oracles and historians alike testifying to the truth about to be revealed:

Ad tertium dicendum quod multis gentiliū facta fuit revelatio de Christo, ut patet per ea quae praedixerunt ... Sibylla etiam praenuntiavit quaedam de Christo, ut Augustinus dicit. Invenitur etiam in historiis Romanorum, quod tempore Constantini Augusti et Irenae matris eius inventum fuit quoddam sepulcrum in quo iacebat homo auream laminam habens in pectore in qua scriptum erat, ‘Christus nascetur ex virgine et credo in eum. O sol, sub Irenae et Constantini temporibus iterum me videbis’.¹⁵

Secondly, and more significantly from our present point of view, he notes the possibility of salvation for those who, if not party to the full revelation of the Christ, nonetheless knew and believed in him by way of a general sense of the providential and thus in some sense salvific purposes of God:

Si qui tamen salvati fuerunt quibus revelatio non fuit facta, non fuerunt salvati absque fide mediatoris. Quia etsi non habuerunt fidem explicitam, habuerunt tamen fidem implicitam in divina providentia, credentes Deum esse liberatorem hominum secundum modos sibi

¹⁴ further, many gentiles obtained salvation through the ministry of the angels, as Dionysius states (*Coel. Hier.* ix). Now it would seem that the gentiles had neither explicit nor implicit faith in Christ, since they received no revelation. Therefore, it appears that it was not necessary for the salvation of all to believe explicitly in the mystery of Christ.

¹⁵ To the third objection we may say that many of the gentiles received revelations of Christ, as is clear from their predictions ... The Sibyl too foretold certain things about Christ, as Augustine states [*Cont. Faust.* xiii.15]. Moreover, we read in the history of the Romans that at the time of Constantine Augustus and his mother Irene a tomb was discovered wherein lay a man on whose breast was a golden plate with the inscription ‘Christ shall be born of a virgin, and in him I believe. O Sun, during the lifetime of Irene and Constantine, you shall see me again’. See also, as far as the Sybilline oracle is concerned, *De ver.* 14.11 ad 5, ult.: ‘Probabile tamen est multis etiam gentilibus ante Christi adventum mysterium redemptionis nostrae fuisse divinitus revelatum, sicut patet ex sibyllinis vaticiniis.’

placitos et secundum quod aliquibus veritatem cognoscentibus ipse revelasset ...¹⁶

True, the structure of the period is hypothetical ('Si qui tamen salvati fuerunt ...'), but given for the sake of the argument that some souls before Christ, other than the Jewish patriarchs, *were* saved, then this, Thomas maintains, would not have been without faith in a mediator. As in the case of the *minores* among the Jews, they would have been saved by implicit faith in the Christ to come, or at least in some sort of mechanism designed at God's good pleasure ('secundum modos sibi placitos') to bring them home to their maker. The Jewish case has, in other words, been extended to cover all those before Christ living in anticipation of God's wishing to treat them well. In fact, and for the purposes of registering Thomas's consistency at this point, it is worth noting that what we have here in the *Secunda secundae* is but a reiteration of positions reached in the earlier *De veritate*, where he had already enquired as to whether explicit faith is in all circumstances a necessity, and where he had already (*a*) drawn a distinction as far as the old Jews were concerned between the learned in the law (for whom explicit faith in the Messiah is of the essence) and the unlearned in the law (for whom implicit faith is enough), and (*b*) accommodated the gentiles at least in so far as they too were committed to a sense of the providentiality of it all, of God's intending to honour them. On the one hand, then, these lines on the question of superiors and inferiors among the Jews of the old dispensation:

Sed ante peccatum et post, omni tempore necessarium fuit a maioribus explicitam fidem de Trinitate habere; non autem a minoribus post peccatum usque ad tempus gratiae; ante peccatum enim forte talis distinctio non fuisset, ut quidam per alios erudirentur de fide. Et similiter etiam post peccatum usque ad tempus gratiae maiores tenebantur habere fidem de redemptore explicitae; minores vero implicite, vel in fide patriarcharum et prophetarum, vel in divina providentia.

(*De ver.* 14.11 resp.)¹⁷

¹⁶ If, however, some were saved without receiving any revelation, they were not saved without faith in a mediator, for, though they did not believe in him explicitly, they did, nevertheless, have implicit faith through believing in divine providence, since they believed that God would deliver mankind in whatever way was pleasing to him, and according to the revelation of the Spirit to those who knew the truth ...

¹⁷ Before and after the fall, the leaders in every age had to have explicit faith in the Trinity. Between the fall and the age of grace, however, the ordinary people did not have to have such explicit belief. Perhaps before the fall there was not such a distinction of persons that some had to be taught the faith by others. Likewise, between the fall and the age of grace, the leading men had to have explicit faith in the Redeemer, and the

while on the other hand, this passage relative to the gentiles living before the time of Christ, souls wise, certainly, in the worldly way of being wise, but, like the Jewish minors, justified on the basis, not of this, but of an as yet intuitive sense of God's will to salvation:

gentiles non ponebantur ut instructores divinae fidei. Unde, quantumcumque essent sapientes sapientia saeculari, inter minores computandi sunt: et ideo sufficiebat eis habere fidem de redemptore implicite, vel in fide legis et prophetarum, vel etiam in ipsa divina providentia.

(*De ver.* 14.11 ad 5)¹⁸

From the *De veritate* to the *Secunda secundae*, there are, it is true, differences of emphasis and expression, and it is worth noting also that some of Thomas's most significant qualifications in respect of pagan or gentile salvation occur, not in the main body of his discourse, but in replies to objections or counter-theses – a situation always to be borne in mind when balancing one aspect of his argument with another. But for all that, his is a generous view of the matter, a readiness to look as favourably as may be at the plight of those living before and beyond the law. Given the contingencies of world history, he believes, the notion of explicit faith as a condition of ultimate homecoming has as a matter of necessity, or, rather, of charity, to be tempered by a sense of the efficacy of implicit faith as that whereby even those formally bereft of the Christ may be accommodated within the soteriological scheme.

2. Why, then, given the availability to him of such a versatile notion as that of implicit faith did Dante, troubled as he was by the plight of the pagan spirits, choose not to make use of it?

The answer to this lies in his commitment to the indispensability of the revelatory instant *in its own right* as a channel of grace. Where, in other words, Thomas is inclined to insist, not only on the event itself, but on a simultaneous movement of grace as the ground of its salvific efficacy, Dante, typically, will settle instead for the power of the event to persuade *from out of its eventuality*, from out of the substance itself of the encounter, a position straightaway making for the exclusion of all those not party to

ordinary people only implicit faith. This was contained either in their belief in the faith of the patriarchs and prophets or in their belief in divine providence.

¹⁸ the gentiles were not established as teachers of divine faith. Hence, no matter how well versed they were in secular wisdom, they should be counted as ordinary people [*minores*]. Therefore, it was enough for them to have implicit faith in the Redeemer, either as part of their belief in the faith of the law and the prophets, or as part of their belief in divine providence itself.

it; on the one hand, then, as bearing on the twofold extrinsic and intrinsic causality of faith, on the coincidence of the event itself and of an inwardly operative movement of grace as the ground of consent, this from the threshold of the *Secunda secundae*:

Respondeo dicendum quod ad fidem duo requiruntur. Quorum unum est ut homini credibilia proponantur, quod requiritur ad hoc quod homo aliquid explicitè credat. Aliud autem quod ad fidem requiritur est assensus credentis ad ea quae proponuntur. Quantum igitur ad primum horum, necesse est quod fides sit a Deo. Ea enim quae sunt fidei excedunt rationem humanam, unde non cadunt in contemplatione hominis nisi Deo revelante. Sed quibusdam quidem revelantur immediate a Deo, sicut sunt revelata apostolis et prophetis, quibusdam autem proponuntur a Deo mittente fidei praedicatores, secundum illud Rom. X, 'quomodo praedicabunt nisi mittantur?' Quantum vero ad secundum, scilicet ad assensum hominis in ea quae sunt fidei, potest considerari duplex causa. Una quidem exterius inducens, sicut miraculum visum, vel persuasio hominis inducentis ad fidem. Quorum neutrum est sufficiens causa, videntium enim unum et idem miraculum, et audientium eandem praedicationem, quidam credunt et quidam non credunt. Et ideo oportet ponere aliam causam interiorem, quae movet hominem interius ad assentiendum his quae sunt fidei. Hanc autem causam Pelagiani ponebant solum liberum arbitrium hominis, et propter hoc dicebant quod initium fidei est ex nobis, inquantum scilicet ex nobis est quod parati sumus ad assentiendum his quae sunt fidei; sed consummatio fidei est a Deo, per quem nobis proponuntur ea quae credere debemus. Sed hoc est falsum. Quia cum homo, assentiendo his quae sunt fidei, elevetur supra naturam suam, oportet quod hoc insit ei ex supernaturali principio interius movente, quod est Deus. Et ideo fides quantum ad assensum, qui est principalis actus fidei, est a Deo interius movente per gratiam.

(ST IIa IIae.6.1 resp.)¹⁹

¹⁹ I answer that, two things are requisite for faith. First, that the things which are of faith should be proposed to man, this being necessary in order that man believe anything explicitly. The second thing requisite for faith is the assent of the believer to the things which are proposed to him. Accordingly, as regards the first of these, faith must needs be from God. Because those things which are of faith surpass human reason, hence they do not come to man's knowledge unless God reveal them. To some, indeed, they are revealed by God immediately, as those things which were revealed to the apostles and prophets, while to some they are proposed by God in sending preachers of the faith, according to Romans 10:15: "How shall they preach, unless they be sent?" As regards the second, namely man's assent to the things which are of faith, we may observe a twofold cause, one of external inducement, such as seeing a miracle, or being persuaded by someone

while on the other, and as bearing now on the demonstrative power of the word – of the word, to be sure, as irradiated by the Spirit, but nonetheless of the word in and for itself – to impress unaided, this from the *Paradiso* at XXIV.91-96:

“La larga ploia
de lo Spirito Santo, ch'è diffusa
in su le vecchie e 'n su le nuove cuoia,
è silogismo che la m'ha conchiusa
acutamente sì, che 'nverso d'ella
ogne dimostrazion mi pare ottusa”.²⁰

– a notion at once reiterated and indeed reinforced by the addition of proofs physical and metaphysical as similarly apt *from out of themselves*, from out of their status as testimony to the truth they themselves ray forth, to confirm the soul in a mood of acquiescence:

E io rispondo: Io credo in uno Dio
solo ed eterno, che tutto 'l ciel move,

to embrace the faith: neither of which is a sufficient cause, since of those who see the same miracle, or who hear the same sermon, some believe, and some do not. Hence we must assert another internal cause, which moves man inwardly to assent to matters of faith. The Pelagians held that this cause was nothing other than man's free-will, and consequently they said that the beginning of faith is from ourselves, inasmuch as, to wit, it is in our power to be ready to assent to things which are of faith, but that the consummation of faith is from God, who proposes to us the things we have to believe. But this is false, for, since man, by assenting to matters of faith, is raised above his nature, this must needs accrue to him from some supernatural principle moving him inwardly; and this is God. Therefore faith, as regards the assent which is the chief act of faith, is from God moving man inwardly by grace. H. Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce chez s. Thomas d'Aquin: étude historique* (Paris: Aubier, 1944); R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St Thomas, Ia IIae, 109-14* (London: B. Herder, 1957); C. Ernst, O.P. (ed. and comm.), *Summa theologiae*, vol. 30 (*The Gospel of Grace. Ia 2ae. 106-114*) (London: Blackfriars, 1972); B. J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Grace and Freedom. Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, ed. F. E. Crowe and R. M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000; originally 1971; in respect of which see also his 'St Thomas's Thought on *Gratia Opereans*', *Theological Studies* 2 (1941), 3, 289-324; 3 (1942), 1, 69-88; 3, 375-402 and 4, 533-78). For Augustine, J. Patout Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1980); J. Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); B. Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?*, trans. M. J. O'Connell (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1997). In general, R. W. Gleason, S.J., *Grace* (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962); N. P. Williams, *The Grace of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966, originally 1930).

²⁰ The plenteous rain of the Holy Spirit which is poured over the old and over the new parchments is a syllogism that has proved it to me so acutely that, in comparison with this, every demonstration seems obtuse to me.

non moto, con amore e con disio;
 e a tal creder non ho io pur prove
 fisice e metafisice, ma dalmi
 anche la verità che quinci piove
 per Moïse, per profeti e per salmi,
 per l'Evangelio e per voi che scriveste
 poi che l'ardente Spirto vi fè almi.

(ibid. ll. 130-38)²¹

And what applies in Canto XXIV by way of the pristine power of the text to persuasion, applies also in the following cantos, where it is a question, not of faith, but of hope and, as the greatest of these things, of love as formed dispositions of the spirit. Here as before, Dante proceeds by way (a) of the *quid est*, of saying what the virtue in question consists of, and (b) of the *quo est*, of explaining how he himself came to be in possession of it. If, then, hope, considered in itself, is but the sure expectation of future glory as resting upon grace and upon antecedent merit, and if love, again considered in itself, is but the connatural movement of the mind towards the good as present in the forum of consciousness, each only ever follows on from the positive encounter, from the evidence afforded either by the text or by existence itself as but the mighty writ large; so, for example, on the word as eloquent in respect of the mighty acts of God and tending as such to engender in the attentive spirit a mood of lively expectation and glowing ardour, these lines from Cantos XXV and XXVI:

“Spene”, diss’ io, “è uno attender certo
 de la gloria futura, il qual produce
 grazia divina e precedente merto.
 Da molte stelle mi vien questa luce;

²¹ And I reply: I believe in one God, sole and eternal, who, unmoved, moves all heaven with love and with desire; and for this belief I have, not only proofs physical and metaphysical, but it is given me also in the truth that rains down hence through Moses and the prophets and the psalms, through the gospel and through you who wrote after the fiery Spirit had made you holy. I. Borzi, ‘L’apoteosi della fede (Par. XXIV)’, in *Verso l’ultima salute. Saggi danteschi* (Milan: Rusconi, 1985), pp. 177-209 (subsequently in S. Zennaro (ed.), *Paradiso. Letture degli anni 1979-81* (Rome: Bonacci, 1989), pp. 643-66); F. Di Gregorio, ‘Il canto XXIV del *Paradiso*. La fede tra *ouoia* e letteratura’, in *L’Alighieri. Rassegna bibliografica dantesca* 30, n.s., 1 (1989), 15-44 (and in *Violenza e carità* (San Severo: Gerni, 1995), pp. 31-54); B. Porcelli, ‘Par. XXIV e la sequenza degli esami sulle virtù teologali’, in *Nuovi studi su Dante e Boccaccio con analisi della ‘Nencia’* (Pisa and Rome: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 1997), pp. 41-55 (and in V. Masiello (ed.), *Studi di filologia e letteratura italiana in onore di Gianvito Resta* (Rome: Salerno, 2000), pp. 203-21); A. Battistini, ‘Fede e bellezza. Il tessuto metaforico del canto XXIV del *Paradiso*’, *L’Alighieri. Rassegna dantesca* 45, n.s. 24 (2004), 79-92.

ma quei la distillò nel mio cor pria
che fu sommo cantor del sommo duce.

‘Sperino in te’, ne la sua tēodia
dice, ‘color che sanno il nome tuo’:
e chi nol sa, s’elli ha la fede mia?

Tu mi stillasti, con lo stillar suo,
ne la pistola poi; sì ch’io son pieno,
e in altrui vostra pioggia repluo”

...

Quella medesima voce che paura
tolta m’avea del sùbito abbarbaglio,
di ragionare ancor mi mise in cura;

e disse: “Certo a più angusto vaglio
ti conviene schiarar: dicer convienti
chi drizzò l’arco tuo a tal berzaglio”.

E io: “Per filosofici argomenti
e per autorità che quinci scende
cotale amor convien che in me si ’mprenti:

ché ’l bene, in quanto ben, come s’intende,
così accende amore, e tanto maggio
quanto più di bontate in sé comprende.

Dunque a l’essenza ov’ è tanto avvantaggio,
che ciascun ben che fuor di lei si trova
altro non è ch’un lume di suo raggio,

più che in altra convien che si mova
la mente, amando, di ciascun che cerne
il vero in che si fonda questa prova.

Tal vero a l’intelletto mio sterne
colui che mi dimostra il primo amore
di tutte le sustanze sempiterno.

Sternel la voce del verace autore,
che dice a Moïse, di sé parlando:
‘Io ti farò vedere ogne valore’.

Sternilmi tu ancora, incominciando
l’alto preconio che grida l’arcano
di qui là giù sovra ogne altro bando”.

(*Par.* XXV.67-78 and XXVI.19-45)²²

²² “Hope”, I said, “is a sure expectation of future glory, which divine grace produces, and preceding merit. From many stars this light comes to me, but he first distilled it in my heart who was the supreme singer of the supreme leader. ‘Let them hope in you who know your name’, he says in his divine song; and who knows it not, if he have my faith? You afterwards in your epistle did distil it in me, together with his distilling, so that I am full and pour again your shower on others” ... The same voice that had delivered me from

while on the life and death of the Christ in particular, not to mention the sheer exhilaration of existence in general (the ‘essere del mondo e l’esser mio’ of line 58), as apt upon reflection to confirm the soul in the way of right loving, these lines again from Canto XXVI:

E io udi: “Per intelletto umano
e per autoritadi a lui concorde
d’i tuoi amori a Dio guarda il sovrano.

Ma dì ancor se tu senti altre corde
tirarti verso lui, sì che tu suone
con quanti denti questo amor ti morde”.

Non fu latente la santa intenzione
de l’aguglia di Cristo, anzi m’accorsi
dove volea menar mia professione.

Però ricominciai: “Tutti quei morsi
che posson far lo cor volgere a Dio,
a la mia caritate son concorsi:

ché l’essere del mondo e l’esser mio,
la morte ch’el sostenne perch’ io viva,
e quel che spera ogni fedel com’ io,
con la predetta conoscenza viva,
tratto m’hanno del mar de l’amor torto,
e del diritto m’han posto a la riva.

my fear at the sudden dazzlement gave me concern to speak again; and it said, “Assuredly you must sift with a finer sieve: you must tell who directed your bow to such a target”. And I: “By philosophic arguments, and by authority that descends from here, such love must needs imprint itself on me; for the good, inasmuch as it is good, kindles love in proportion as it is understood, and so much the more the more of good it contains in itself. Therefore, to that essence wherein is such supremacy that whatsoever good be found outside of it is naught else save a beam of its own radiance, more than to any other must the mind be moved, in love, of whoever discerns the truth on which this proof is founded. Such a truth he makes plain to my intelligence who demonstrates to me the first love of all the eternal substances. The voice of the veracious author makes it plain where, speaking of himself, he says to Moses, ‘I will make you see all goodness’. You also set it forth to me in the beginning of your sublime proclamation, which more than any other heralding, declares below the mystery of this place on high.” A. Tartaro, ‘Certezze e speranza nel XXV del *Paradiso*’, *L’Alighieri. Rassegna bibliografica dantesca* 24 (1983), 1, 3-15 (also, idem, ‘Il canto XXV del *Paradiso*’, in S. Zennaro (ed.), *Paradiso. Letture degli anni 1979-’81 tenute nella Casa di Dante* (Rome: Bonacci, 1989), pp. 667-83); E. Pasquini, ‘Il canto della speranza (*Pd* XXV)’, in M. De Nichilo et al. (eds), *Confini dell’Umanesimo letterario. Studi in onore di Francesco Tato*, 3 vols (Rome: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2003), vol. 3, pp. 1039-47; V. Capelli, ‘Lettura del canto XXV del *Paradiso*. La speranza di Dante’, in *Letture dantesche tenute nella pieve di Polenta e nella basilica di S. Mercuriale in Forlì (1996-2005)* (Genoa and Milan: Marietti, 2006), pp. 269-83. Also, J. Moltmann, ‘Speranza cristiana: messianica o trascendentale? Un dibattito teologico con Gioacchino da Fiore e Tommaso d’Aquino’, *Asprenas* 30 (1983), 23-46.

Le fronde onde s'infronda tutto l'orto
de l'ortolano eterno, am' io cotanto
quanto da lui a lor di bene è porto".

Sì com' io tacqui, un dolcissimo canto
risonò per lo cielo, e la mia donna
dicea con li altri: "Santo, santo, santo!"

(*Par.* XXVI.46-69)²⁵

Everywhere, then, the pattern is the same, for everywhere it is a question of Dante's trusting to the power of the event itself to impress as the means of divine purposefulness. But the price is high, for to settle on the power of the event itself to impress is to settle for the exclusion of those who, through no fault of their own, are a stranger to the event, and it is in this context that Dante begins to experiment with a revised scheme, with an alternative way of seeing and setting up the question of election. As if constrained by the innermost logic of it all (which for Dante is always the innermost *affective* logic of it all), old inclinations give way to a fresh configuration of thought, to a sense after all of God's willingness (*a*) to hear the prayer of those most anxious in respect of the predicament of the virtuous pagan, and (*b*) to grace the pagan spirit with a view to bringing it home at last to the high consistory of paradise. This at any rate – this twofold preoccupation with the susceptibility of the Godhead at the point of intercession and with the boundlessness of his grace with respect even to those innocent of Christ and clergy – is the substance of his discourse in the soteriological cantos *par excellence* of the *Commedia*, Cantos XIX and XX of the *Paradiso*, cantos which start out with the apparent injustice of things as they stand, with the apparent *unrighteousness* of reprobating the merely unfortunate:

Assai t'è mo aperta la latebra
che t'ascondeva la giustizia viva,
di che facei question cotanto crebra;

²⁵ And I heard: "On the ground of human reason and of the authorities concordant with it, the highest of all your loves looks to God; but tell me also if you feel other cords draw you toward him, so that you declare with how many teeth this love grips you." The holy intention of the Eagle of Christ was not hidden, indeed it was plain to me whither he would direct my profession. Therefore I began again: "All those things whose bite can make the heart turn to God have wrought together in my love; for the being of the world and my own being, the death that he sustained that I might live, and that which every believer hopes, as do I, with the living assurance of which I spoke, have drawn me from the sea of perverse love and placed me on the shore of right love. The leaves wherewith all the garden of the eternal gardener is enleaved I love in measure of the good borne unto them from him." As soon as I was silent a most sweet song resounded through the heaven, and my lady sang with the rest, "Holy, Holy, Holy!"

ché tu dicevi: “Un uom nasce a la riva
 de l’Indo, e quivi non è chi ragioni
 di Cristo né chi legga né chi scriva;
 e tutti suoi voleri e atti buoni
 sono, quanto ragione umana vede,
 senza peccato in vita o in sermoni.
 Muore non battezzato e senza fede:
 ov’ è questa giustizia che ’l condanna?
 ov’ è la colpa sua, se ei non crede?”

(*Par. XIX.67-78*)²⁴

Thus the question everywhere lurking just beneath the surface of Dante’s particular species of bi-culturalism, the question of his ‘simultaneous attachment both to Christianity and to paganism’,²⁵ rises up now to confront him in all its power not only to confound but, in its apparent injustice, to scandalize the pious spirit. First, then, comes the admonitory moment of the argument, the warning off of those taking it upon themselves to question the substance of divine justice:

Or tu chi se’, che vuo’ sedere a scranna,
 per giudicar di lungi mille miglia
 con la veduta corta d’una spanna?
 Certo a colui che meco s’assottiglia,
 se la Scrittura sopra voi non fosse,
 da dubitar sarebbe a maraviglia.
 Oh terreni animali! oh menti grosse!
 La prima volontà, ch’è da sé buona,
 da sé, ch’è sommo ben, mai non si mosse.
 Cotanto è giusto quanto a lei consuona:
 nullo creato bene a sé la tira,
 ma essa, radiando, lui cagiona.

(*Par. XIX.79-90*)²⁶

²⁴ Now is laid well open to you the hiding place which concealed from you the living justice concerning which you have made question so incessantly. For you said: “A man is born on the banks of the Indus, and none is there to speak, or read, or write of Christ, and all his wishes and acts are good, so far as human reason sees, without sin in life or in speech. He dies unbaptized, and without faith. Where is this justice which condemns him? Where is his sin if he does not believe?”

²⁵ K. Foster, O.P., ‘The Two Dantes (I): Limbo and Implicit Faith’, in *The Two Dantes and Other Studies* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977), p. 156.

²⁶ Now who are you who would sit upon the seat to judge at a thousand miles away with the short sight that carries but a span? Assuredly, for him who subtilizes with me, if the Scriptures were not set over you, there would be marvelous occasion for questioning.

But this, as Dante knows full well, is no answer at all, admonition being one thing but affirmation quite another. The answer proper – spectacular for its fashioning from one of Christ’s harder sayings in the gospel (the ‘a diebus autem Joannis Baptistae usque nunc, regnum cœlorum vim patitur, et violenti rapiunt illud’ of Matthew 11:12)²⁷ a statement of superlative graciousness – comes in the next canto, Canto XX, beginning at line 94; for to contemplate the Godhead in its essential nature, Dante insists, is to contemplate it in terms, not of its *impassivity*, but of its *vulnerability*, of its readiness to give way to love in the elementary integrity of love, giving way, in God, being the sign, not of his defeat, but of his victory, of the victory of love over lovelessness:

Regnum celorum violenza pate
da caldo amore e da viva speranza,
che vince la divina volontate:
non a guisa che l’omo a l’om sobranza,
ma vince lei perché vuole esser vinta,
e, vinta, vince con sua beninanza.²⁸

O earthly animals! O gross minds! The primal will, which of itself is good, has never moved from itself, which is the supreme good. All is just that accords with it; no created good draws it to itself, but it, raying forth, is the cause of it. Cf. *Mon.* II.ii.4-5: ‘Ex hiis iam liquet quod ius, cum sit bonum, per prius in mente Dei est; et, cum omne quod in mente Dei est sit Deus, iuxta illud “Quod factum est in ipso vita erat”, et Deus maxime se ipsum velit, sequitur quod ius a Deo, prout in eo est, sit volutum. Et cum voluntas et volutum in Deo sit idem, sequitur ulterius quod divina voluntas sit ipsum ius. Et iterum ex hoc sequitur quod ius in rebus nichil est aliud quam similitudo divine voluntatis; unde fit quod quicquid divine voluntati non consonat, ipsum ius esse non possit, et quicquid divine voluntati est consonum, ius ipsum sit.’

²⁷ ever since the coming of John the Baptist the kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and violent men are seizing it (*NEB*). Cf. Luke 16:16: ‘Lex et prophetae, usque ad Joannem: ex eo regnum Dei evangelizatur, et omnis in illud vim facit.’

²⁸ *Regnum celorum* suffers violence from fervent love and from living hope which vanquishes the divine will; not as man overcomes man, but vanquishes it because it wills to be vanquished, and, vanquished, vanquishes with its own benignity. G. Cannavò, *Regnum celorum violenza pate. Dante e la salvezza dell’umanità. Letture Dantesche Giubilari, Vicenza, ottobre 1999 - giugno 2000* (Montella (Avellino): Accademia Vivarium Novum, 2002), with, at pp. 193-203, A. M. Chiavacci Leonardi, ‘La salvezza degli infedeli: il canto XX del *Paradiso*’ (subsequently in *Le bianche stole. Saggi sul Paradiso di Dante* (Florence: Sismel, 2009), pp. 97-112). Also, F. Ruffini, ‘Dante e il problema della salvezza degli infedeli’, *Studi danteschi* 14 (1930), 79-92; B. Quilici, *Il destino dell’infidele virtuoso nel pensiero di Dante* (Florence: Ariani, 1936); T. O’H. Hahn, ‘I “gentili” e “un uom nasce a la riva / de l’Indo” (Par. XIX, vv.70 sqq.)’, *L’Alighieri. Rassegna bibliografica dantesca* 18 (1977), 2, 3-8; R. Morghen, ‘Dante tra l’“umano” e la storia della salvezza’, in *L’Alighieri. Rassegna bibliografica dantesca* 21 (1980), 1, 18-30; N. Iliescu, ‘Will Virgil be saved?’, *Mediaevalia* 12 (1986), 93-114 and as ‘Sarà salvo Virgilio?’ in C. Franco and L. Morgan (eds), *Dante. Summa medievalis. Proceedings of the Symposium of the Center for Italian Studies, SUNY Stony*

Now here, clearly, we have to be careful, for there can be no question of stepping outside grace as the encompassing, as the first and final cause of every salvific inflexion of the spirit in man. On the contrary, as Dante goes on to make plain in this canto, it is by grace and grace alone that the individual is brought home to the fold:

D'i corpi suoi non uscir, come credi,
Gentili, ma Cristiani, in ferma fede
quel d'i passuri e quel d'i passi piedi.
Ché l'una de lo 'nferno, u' non si riede
già mai a buon voler, tornò a l'ossa;

Brook, (Stony Brook, N.Y.: Forum Italicum, 1995), pp. 112-33; M. Allan, 'Does Dante hope for Vergil's Salvation?', *Modern Language Notes* 104 (1989), 193-205; M. Picone, 'La "viva speranza" di Dante e il problema della salvezza dei pagani virtuosi. Una lettura di *Paradiso* 20', *Quaderni di Italianistica* 10 (1989), 1-2, 251-68; idem, 'Auctoritas classica e salvezza cristiana: una lettura tipologica di *Purgatorio* XXII', in *Studi in memoria di Giorgio Varanini* (Pisa: Giardini, 1992), vol. I (*Dal Duecento al Quattrocento*), pp. 379-95; T. Barolini, 'Q: Does Dante hope for Vergil's Salvation?', *Modern Language Notes* 105 (1990), 1, 138-44 and 147-49 (and in *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 151-57); B. D. Schildgen, 'Dante and the Indus', *Dante Studies* 111 (1993), 177-93; eadem, 'Dante's Utopian Political Vision, the Roman Empire, and the Salvation of Pagans', *Annali d'Italianistica* 19 (2001), 51-69; G. Muresu, 'Le "vie" della redenzione (*Paradiso* VII)', *Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, ser. 8, 98 (1994), 1-2, 5-19; N. Cacciaglia, "'Per fede e per opere" (una lettura del tema della salvezza nella *Divina Commedia*)', in *Critica Letteraria* 30 (2002), 2-3, 265-74 (also in *Annali dell'Università per Stranieri di Perugia* 29 (2002), 123-131); B. Martinelli, 'Canto XIX', in G. Güntert and M. Picone (eds), *Lectura Dantis Turicensis. Paradiso* (Florence: Cesati, 2002), pp. 281-305 (revised with the title 'La fede in Cristo. Dante e il problema della salvezza (*Paradiso* XIX)', *Rivista di Letteratura Italiana* 20 (2002), 2, 11-39, and in *Dante. L'"altro viaggio"* (Pisa: Giardini, 2007), pp. 289-319); G. Inglese, 'Il destino dei non credenti. Lettura di *Paradiso* XIX', *La Cultura. Rivista trimestrale di filosofia letteratura e storia* 42 (2004), 2, 315-29; A. Lanza, 'Giustizia divina e salvezza dei "senza fede"', in *Dante eterodosso* (Bergamo: Moretti Honegger, 2004), pp. 113-24; C. O'Connell Baur, *Dante's Hermeneutics of Salvation. Passages to Freedom in the Divine Comedy* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2007). More generally, S. Harent, 'Infidèles, Salut des', in P. Moraux et al. (eds), *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, 15 vols (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1909-46), vol. 7, ii, cols 1276-1930; L. Capéran, *Le Problème du salut des infidèles*, 2 vols, revised edn (Toulouse: Grand Séminaire, 1934); T. P. Dunning 'Langland and the Salvation of the Heathen', *Medium Aevum* 12 (1943), 45-54; M. Frezza, *Il problema della salvezza dei pagani (da Abelardo al Seicento)* (Naples: Fiorentino, 1962); R. V. Turner, "'Descendit ad Inferos". Medieval Views on Christ's descent into Hell and the Salvation of the Ancient Just', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27 (1966), 173-94; C. L. Vitto, *The Virtuous Pagan in Middle English Literature*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 79, part 5 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1989); N. Watson, 'Visions of Inclusion. Universal Salvation and Vernacular Theology in Pre-Reformation England', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (1997), 145-88. On the cases of Trajan and Rhipeus, G. Whately, 'The Uses of Hagiography: the Legend of Pope Gregory and the Emperor Trajan in the Middle Ages' (note 8 above).

e ciò di viva spene fu mercede:
 di viva spene, che mise la possa
 ne' prieghi fatti a Dio per suscitarla,
 sì che potesse sua voglia esser mossa.
 L'anima glorïosa onde si parla,
 tornata ne la carne, in che fu poco,
 credette in lui che potëa aiutarla;
 e credendo s'accese in tanto foco
 di vero amor, ch'a la morte seconda
 fu degna di venire a questo gioco.
 L'altra, per grazia che da sì profonda
 fontana stilla, che mai creatura
 non pinse l'occhio infino a la prima onda,
 tutto suo amor là giù pose a drittura:
 per che, di grazia in grazia, Dio li aperse
 l'occhio a la nostra redenzion futura;
 ond' ei credette in quella, e non sofferse
 da indi il puzzo più del paganesmo;
 e riprendiene le genti perverse.

(*Par.* XX.103-26)²⁹

But that neither is nor can be the end of the matter, for grace, properly understood, is a question, not only of facilitation, but of recognition, of welcoming home the one graced as itself a matter of grace, at which point, given the unspeakable substance of divine goodness and the unspeakable extent of divine loving, neither of them susceptible to contemplation 'within the short span of a man's hand', the way is open for a bringing home, not simply of those knowing the law, but of those knowing not the law but having it nonetheless inscribed on their heart.³⁰ In fashioning,

²⁹ They came forth from their bodies not as you think, gentiles, but Christians, with firm faith, the one in the feet that were to suffer, the other in the feet that had suffered. For the one came back to his bones from hell, where none ever returns to right will; and this was the reward of living hope, of living hope that gave power to the prayers made to God to raise him up, that it might be possible for his will to be moved. The glorious soul I tell of, having returned to the flesh for a short time, believed in him that was able to help him; and, believing, was kindled to such a fire of true love that on his second death he was worthy to come to this rejoicing. The other, through grace that wells from a fountain so deep that never did creature thrust eye down to its first wave, set all his love below on righteousness; wherefore, from grace to grace, God opened his eye to our future redemption, so that he believed in it, and therefore endured not the stench of paganism, and reproved the perverse peoples for it.

³⁰ Romans 2:11-15: 'Non est enim personarum acceptio apud Deum. Quicumque enim sine lege peccaverunt, sine lege et peribunt; et quicumque in lege peccaverunt, per legem iudicabuntur. Non enim auditores legis iusti sunt apud Deum, sed factores legis

in other words, from one of Christ's harder sayings an essay in divine vulnerability, in God's being defeated because he wishes to be defeated, Dante, just for a moment, delivers himself to something quite other than the exclusivities of classical soteriological consciousness, to a sense of how it is that, espying his son from afar, the Father rushes out to meet him, falling as he does so upon his neck and kissing him.³¹ The moment, in short, is stupendous, for this, like all great theology, is theology busy about its own undoing, its dismantling of the leading emphasis in favour of something still more sublime.

iustificabuntur. Cum enim gentes, quae legem non habent, naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt, eiusmodi legem non habentes, ipsi sibi sunt lex; qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis, testimonium reddente illis conscientia ipsorum, et inter se invicem cogitationum accusantium aut etiam defendentium.'

³¹ In respect of the hastening motif, the 'così corre ad amore' passage of *Purg.* XV.64-72: 'Ed elli a me: "Però che tu rificchi / la mente pur a le cose terrene, / di vera luce tenebre dispicchi. / Quello infinito e ineffabil bene / che là sù è, così corre ad amore / com' a lucido corpo raggio vene. / Tanto si dà quanto trova d'ardore; / sì che, quantunque carità si stende, / cresce sovr' essa l'eterno valore".'